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INDUSTRIAL PEACE FROM THE STANDPOINT OF A TRADE UNIONIST

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Industrial peace cannot even be hoped for where collective bargaining is denied to the organized wage-workers, or where vast numbers of unorganized workers prevail in any industry. The last ten years have witnessed what might be termed a racial revolution in the composition of help in many great industries. This is perhaps as much in evidence in the textile industry as in any other of our large industries. Forty years ago the employees were largely composed of operatives who had emigrated from Great Britain: English, Irish, Scotch and Welsh, with a dash of native-born Americans, made up the help in the cotton and woolen mills, silk mills being very rare at that period. After a while came the French Canadian, lured by the promise of a steady weekly wage. This class of operative was of a somewhat migratory kind, many of them remaining only long enough to accumulate enough money to purchase a farm in their native country. As time went on they began to assimilate our American ideas and customs, until to-day there is little or no difference between the manners and mode of living of English-speaking and French Canadian textile workers.

The English-speaking mill workers brought with them, among their many British traits, that of trade unionism fostered and practiced by their forefathers in spite of the bitter opposition and at times cruel persecution of the old-time mill master who looked upon a trade union as a criminal attempt to destroy his business, and treated it accordingly. As the French Canadians became more Americanized, a tendency which quickly evinced itself as the first crop of children began to attain manhood and womanhood, they also joined in with the English-speaking wage-workers and became active in the trade union movement. Then came the struggle for more sanitary conditions under which to work and live, and for higher wages; strikes and lockouts followed, but steady progress was being made irrespective of how these strikes or lockouts ended

for the time being. Hours of labor were reduced, factory inspection was established and wages were raised whenever and wherever the opportunity presented itself. As the textile industry grew, more operatives were needed, and while some improvements had certainly taken place which made the labor in the mills rather lighter than of yore, there was still little inducement for parents to put their children in the mills, and many a sacrifice was made, and many an anxious thought given to making it possible for John to be kept out of the spinning-room and Mary kept from the life of a weaver. Then started the movement that brought a stream of men, women and children from Continental Europe. Southern Europe was scoured, and to-day our textile mills are peopled by thousands upon thousands of men, women and children who never saw a textile mill before coming to this country, who cannot speak a word of our language, who, in the beginning, were only too willing to work for whatever wages they could get, and were contented to live under almost any kind of conditions. They knew nothing of organization; trade unions were something beyond their power of understanding; hence the work started and carried along by the pioneers of the textile industry, that of raising the whole standard of this particular industry, was halted. And with the exploitation of the foreign-speaking operatives which became quite common on account of their lack of understanding of our American customs, in some instances the ground gained through the many struggles of the English-speaking operatives was almost entirely lost, and conditions became worse than ever.

What does all this mean? Where is it all to end? What is going to be its effect on the industrial peace of the future? While I have used the textile industry as one illustration, everything that I have said in regard to this particular industry applies to many other of our large industries. The doors of immigration thrown wide open to the desirable and the undesirable, dumped down by thousands in one given spot, herded together sometimes under the most miserable and un-American conditions, used only for what energy they have left, not a thought given towards educating them even in the slightest degree into some understanding of our American institutions and our American ideals, an easy prey for the teachings of the anarchist and the demagogue, their minds and their brains fed and fired by an unlimited supply of literature that

only attempted to appeal to their passions and to their class consciousness; these hundreds of thousands of wage-workers are to-day slowly but surely awakening to a realization of their power of numbers. That they have been exploited goes without saying. Their exploitation has also helped to crush down others who, speaking our tongue, loyal to our American flag and our American institutions, must forsooth go down for the time being in the great industrial struggle. The revolt of the iron and steel workers at McKees Rocks, the strike of the miners of West Virginia, the great uprising of the textile workers in Lawrence, all with their accompaniment of lawlessness and bloodshed, are symptomatic of the conditions of the times. Passions have been fired by the tongues of men who would tear down "Old Glory" to-morrow and flaunt the red flag of revolution from the same flagpole. We have yet heard only the rumblings of what may follow unless something be quickly and effectually done to secure for the wage-worker, whether he be born under our flag or any other flag, what he is entitled to: a fair return for labor performed, and a guarantee against exploitation by those who have induced him to come to our shores.

The trade union movement has done much to bring this about. That it has not done more is because every step it has taken and every effort it has made to elevate the standard of the wage-worker in any of our industries has been hampered, opposed and antagonized by those representing the capitalistic end; and on many occasions aided and helped considerably by a certain portion of our body politic, men and women of peculiar thought, who, while ostensibly aiming to wipe out capitalism, breed distrust, suspicion and discord among the ranks of the wage-workers to an extent that prevents real organization that wrongs may be righted and the wage-worker come into his own.

The lying tongue of the revolutionist and the demagogue is never silent in its work of poisoning the mind of the foreigner when he reaches our shores against the men and women in the labor movement, whose whole lives have been and are being spent in the work of uplifting the condition of the toilers. There can be only one of two possible endings to this great industrial unrest and revolt: we shall either have organization of wage-workers under safe, sane and law-abiding leadership, which believes in the abolition of all forms of involuntary servitude, in the principle of collective bargaining,

mediation and arbitration; or we shall have organization that preaches class hatred and direct action, and practices sabotage and syndicalism.

The trade union movement stands to-day where it has always stood, and where it will stand in the future, for the uplift of the man who toils; for shorter hours of labor, that more time may be given for rest, recreation and education; for the abolition of child labor, that we may have a more vigorous manhood and a more healthy motherhood; for a wage that will guarantee a life worth living and enough to spare for old age; for obedience to our laws with the legal and moral right to protest when such laws become oppressive or curtail our God-given right of free speech and free press; for the right to organize and for the right to strike when all honorable effort has failed of a peaceful settlement. When these principles are fully recognized by all the people, and when all employers get away from the idea of being the embodiment of "divine right," and recognize the right of an employee either singly or collectively to have a say as to what conditions he shall labor under and for what wages he shall work; when, in a word, the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God are fully and freely recognized by all, then, and not until then, may we even dream of Industrial Peace.